

Communications with Young Professionals

The question of how to establish open communications with the young professionals of the Agency has been raised time and again in recent years. The complaints of young people have been voiced in attitude surveys, task force studies, numerous papers dealing with personnel management concerns, and at countless training sessions.

It is interesting to note that these complaints, particularly in the late 1960's, had to do with lines of communication upward as well as downward. The Inspector General's report of the survey of 1969 noted a "lack of good two-way communication. . .it is not that young professionals have all the answers; they simply want an audience to weigh what they have to say."

The emphasis appeared to be on problems of communication upward with a secondary attention paid to lateral or downward communication.

Certainly, Agency management responded in a positive manner. The Management Advisory Group was created, and without a great deal of initial fan-fare, the word ultimately sifted through the ranks that the Group was indeed there, was active, and was listened to.

Within the Directorates, junior advisory groups and junior professional boards and panels were formed, various boards and panels were expanded to include memberships of young professional officers and junior professional "round-ups" and informal seminars with more senior officers were encouraged. While a certain amount

of trial and error went into these efforts they are, with varying modifications, now going concerns and young professionals in the Agency are aware of them.

As a result, the emphasis appears to have shifted. In the recent reports (March and April, 1972) of the "youth study" working committee (four young professionals representing each of the four directorates) of the Human Resources Group, the following statement appears: "though many recognized the need for compartmentation, they feel that lateral and downward channels of communication were clogged," and, in fuller explanation, "not so much to a lack of substantive communication required to get their job done as to a lack of communication of developments, thinking, and events at organizational levels above and parallel to their own. Being in the 'know', having a feel for what's going on upstairs, and where things are moving, apparently has considerable value for fostering and sustaining a sense of belonging and commitment in these young officers."

If there is any new significance to this wish for communication downward it would seem to point to a success on the part of the Agency's management in creating new lines of communication upward. At no point in the report of this latest survey were specific complaints registered about "clogged lines" upward.

It is difficult to identify specifically what people mean when they complain of poor communication. Without belaboring the point, communication, good or bad, is a matter of skill or lack of it in inter-personal relations. It is the desire for mutual understanding that makes communication successful.

There is plenty of evidence that Agency managers at the higher level of command understand this. The measurable success of their efforts to open lines of communication upward attest to it.

With respect to communicating downward to the young professional-- what is it he wants to know?--it would appear that the statement quoted above having to do with "Being in the 'know', having a feel for what's going on upstairs . . ." is as reasonable a definition of what is meant by downward communication as we can expect.

The two recent all-employee bulletins on the Victor Marchetti court action are examples. The popular reaction throughout the Agency has been highly favorable. People, particularly young people, felt that top management was sharing with them the how and why of a difficult decision, a decision that everyone had a professional interest in. The same was true of the bulletins and notices issued during the President's reduction order and wage freeze in the fall of 1970.

In summation:

The Agency command structure has done a great deal in these last few years to open lines of communication, particularly those flowing from the bottom to the top.

The attention of our young professionals now appears to be focused in effective communication downward.

There is every reason to believe that management, through command channels, can dramatically improve downward communication as defined by those young professionals who took part in recent surveys.

As a suggestion, one step might be to explore the rationale behind the issuance of the Marchetti bulletins in terms of a similar use by the Deputy Directors within their own Directorates.

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

Executive Registry

SUBJECT: (Optional)

FROM:

Director of Personnel
5 E 56 HQ

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

5 MAY 1972

STATINTL

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1. Executive Director-
Comptroller
7 E 12 HQ

5/5 5/30

2. DD/Pers/PrC/Plans Staff *20m*

3. D/Pers -

4. Harry - Thanks -

5. I didn't use it,

6. as the platter

7. was full - We'll

8. get to it

9. another time -

10. [Redacted]

11. [Redacted]

12. [Redacted]

13. [Redacted]

14. [Redacted]

15. [Redacted]

Attached is a brief paper on "Communications" as requested by you for possible use at the Director's Annual Conference. We did not explore the subject in depth but attempted to provide a handout that would serve the purpose of stimulating discussion.

Harry B. Fisher
Director of Personnel

assume you have an appropriate file - we may want to use again -

STATINTL

LEGIB